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COUNTRY TABLE DECORATIONS.

FOR decorative purposes nothing is more useful than moss. It is a mistake to suppose that moss is all of one color. It is of every hue, between bronze and emerald green, shining and golden green, deep dark purple green; and its shades both contrast and harmonize. It is soft and pliable, and easily manipulated, lying flat, or taking any form desired, and it is also most abundant. Added to this it is at its perfection in that very barren time of the year between Christmas and April. We give below some of the ways in which it may be turned to account.

Gypsy kettles are now of course rococo; but their form will never be out of place, and mossy kettles at least are new. The tripod is formed of mossy sticks, the "kettle" is covered with moss, and the tin is filled with flowers or ferns, a very few sufficing if they are put into sand; but nothing looks prettier with the green moss than the winter cherry. Fruit dishes can be contrived out of common punnets or round open baskets, covered with moss and lined with white paper, and a plateau of moss is charming.

The best way of collecting moss for decoration is to pull it in large tufts, which on being brought to the house should be well shaken and spread singly on newspapers for twenty-four hours, and they should be thoroughly shaken again to free them from bits and from their insect population before using. Moss should, if possible, be collected after a thaw, when its color is much more vivid and retained for a longer time; but it will always keep green for a week or two if it is sprinkled daily from the rose of a watering pot. For covering sticks it should be taken in tufts sufficiently large to wrap round them; the stick is held in the left hand, the moss in the right, and care must be taken to fold it over the end. A long piece of twine or gardening wire is now passed round it, the end being firmly secured, and pulled tightly in until it does not show. It must be wound round again, and then a second tuft is taken, the ends of which are wrapped neatly over the first, and secured in the same way without cutting the twine, and keeping the moss as evenly and tightly rolled as possible. When the stick is covered, the end of the twine is secured, and if tightly done all will remain quite firm. If it looks too shaggy, it may be trimmed with a pair of scissors. The handle of the basket can be covered in the same way, and it should be done first. For the sides, the upper edges of the tufts should be turned under the tin, and the first string should be tied under the top. The mode of covering punnets or flower pots is just the same. For a plateau of moss, a board of the desired size is requisite; an elaborate one may have a sheet of looking-glass in the centre, surrounded with moss-covered pots of ferns, and its edges may be cut for the dishes to fit into, or they may stand upon it. The moss must be laid down flat in tufts, which should overlap each other a little, and all ragged edges must be tucked in until it presents a quite smooth and even surface, either of one kind of moss or of as many varieties as possible. The common feather moss is the best for this purpose. It can have a border of gray and orange lichen, and outside of this a second of the small-leaved trailing ivy. The manipulation of moss will be rather difficult at first, but practice makes perfect, and it always recognizes the hand that loves it, and answers to it.

But we are not confined to moss for our table decorations. Borders of leaves and ferns are most effective for dishes. A wreath for each may be twined of the runners of the common periwinkle. The centre of the table can have a border of holly or ivy, the green at the edges, the white in the centre, with a single line of berries. Bright leaves can be collected in the autumn and dried, and afterwards varnished. The Virginian creeper is the most vivid in color, but the greatest variety can be found on the bramble. On a single spray last autumn, when they were especially bright, we saw yellow with scarlet edges, orange with green, deep red, purple blotched with red and orange, and brown striped and bordered with green; while a single small leaf was green, orange, red, purple, and brown, like a miniature macaw. Maple leaves will give scarlet, yellow, and green, to be put alternately. Ferns gathered and ironed between brown paper while perfectly fresh, until they are dry, keep their color; but it requires a little care and practice to have the irons at the right heat. If they are too hot, the fern is scorched; if not hot enough, it does not dry quickly. To use these, a strip of cartridge paper, the required depth and length, is cut

for a straight border, a circle for a round one. It is best for the latter to stand the dish upon a sheet of paper and draw the circle or oval, and then to cut the width of the border beyond. The leaves and ferns are now stitched on, and make borders that will last for weeks. The ferns may radiate or all follow one way; but in either case the paper must be wide enough to take their whole length, as the points are so brittle. Ivy need not be dried, as it will keep fresh for many days. The freshness is better preserved by brown paper than white, and it is easy to cover it. Single ferns may be laid lengthwise between the dishes, their stems crossing at right-angles, or to edge the slip cloths. Glasses may be filled with the flower characteristic of the month. It is always prettier to keep to one or at most three well-combined sorts.

BADLY-MADE FURNITURE.

IT is very difficult to induce any chair maker to undertake the execution of new designs. The workmen are accustomed to making hundreds of backs and legs all alike, and it is only by agreeing to pay a much larger price than the chair is intrinsically worth that you can persuade them even to look at a novel design. The remedy for this state of things is only to be found with the public themselves, who, if they persist in encouraging bad taste and bad construction, cannot expect that manufacturers will offer them better things at the cost of extra trouble and expense to themselves. In country places it is not unusual to meet with the survival of old forms in furniture, where the workman, following the traditions of his craft, still makes chairs and tables simple in form and sound in construction, which would afford an admirable lesson in first principles to his London brethren.

The richest piece of furniture in the dining-room should be the sideboard, which affords plenty of scope for the designer's art; but here, as elsewhere, simplicity of form and delicacy of detail are the fundamental rules to be observed, and ornament of any other kind may depend upon the natural effect of beautiful wood-work. A piece of furniture described in the upholsterers' catalogues as "a noble mahogany sideboard with handsome serpentine-shaped top and high plate-glass back, enriched with artistic carving and twisted pillars," cannot be chosen as an example of the appropriate application of the principles of design; but even this is preferable to those pretentious and vulgar productions in what is glibly called the "Early English style," which are usually covered with a profusion of ornament in hideous caricatures of every animal and vegetable form.

Monsters besmeared with stain and varnish grin at you from every point, and you cannot even open a drawer or a cupboard without having your feelings outraged by coming into contact with the legs or wings of a dead bird or some other ghastly trophy of man's love of slaughter, which frequently take the place of an ordinary handle. If this so-called carving possessed any artistic merit, and were in fact what it only pretends to be—a correct representation of natural objects—it would be worthy of admiration though it might be thought to be falsely applied.

SOME HINTS ABOUT PASTEL PAINTING.

A PAINTER of much experience in this branch of art gives the following information concerning the materials she uses and the system she pursues, which will be found useful, we doubt not, to many amateurs:

I never use stumps, and rub very little with the finger. Before beginning to paint in this medium, a knowledge of drawing is "de rigueur," and then, if one is gifted with the sentiment for color, pastel painting can easily be mastered. It is an error to fancy that this medium is exceptionally perishable. Several portraits in pastels in The Louvre, painted more than two hundred years ago, still in excellent preservation, attest to the contrary. For example, there is an aged religieuse executed in pastels by Dumontier in 1615. There are portraits of Rosalva (her own portrait) of the famous Marquise de Pompadour, of Louis XV., Marie Leckzinska, all as vivid as the day they were painted. Doubtless special care is required for their preservation; they must be covered with glass immediately, as the least touch destroys them, and they mildew in damp rooms. For beginning a drawing destined to be colored in pastels, be careful not to grease the paper before beginning to lay your tints. When the sketch is put in, dust it, and go over it lightly with sanguine (red chalk),

massing in the shadows, and keep their shapes distinct; then attack the lighter parts. Cross-hatching ("hachures") is the best process. Use the finger to blend the tints together, but do not rub much, and never before the paper is completely covered with pastels. Towards the completion of the work use the demi-dur pastels, point them, and go over the drawing of the eyes, nose, and mouth. Pastel pleases because of its delicacy, brilliancy, and vivacity; it seems admirably suited to render the glowing, fresh complexions of women and children.

Decorative Art Notes.

As many as 140,000 works have been sent in from the art schools throughout Great Britain for competition at South Kensington, and there is reason to believe that the number next year will be exceeded.

Buttons of terra-cotta have been introduced with much success for decoration in England by an Irish lady, who paints them and has also invented a plan for glazing the surface without firing. Her work is done in oils, not in water-colors, and is extremely beautiful and minute. Most of the prettily ornamented articles which are sold in England are painted on the Continent, and have a constant and lucrative sale. These terra-cotta buttons might form a nucleus for a better paid and less laborious work for ladies than any that has recently been recommended. We should like to hear of their introduction in this country. Oil colors are not necessarily dirty in their use, and are much less disappointing and more easy to learn as an art to live by than water-colors.

Small wooden panels covered with bronzed leather ready for painting on in oils are a novelty lately introduced by Yandell, the upholsterer in Eighteenth Street, and very admirably adapted they are to the purpose. The bronzes vary in color, there being green, brown, and red. Their effect as a background is highly decorative. Mr. Yandell has inserted some small panels in an ebony table, and the effect is very rich and beautiful. As the price asked for them is moderate, we shall not be surprised if they become quite popular with amateurs.

The following are some novelties for bracket decoration: A band of pale blue silk, between four and five inches wide, painted with a wreath of flowers, and laid on to rich blue velvet, showing a margin of over an inch at each side; the bracket covered with blue velvet. Again, a band of gray silk, with a lake and mountain scene painted on the length of the bracket, arranged on red velvet in the same way. If the silk is well stretched and pressed it has when mounted the appearance of painted china set in velvet. The edges are turned in and machine-stitched with silk. For a variety, oval medallions of painted silk on velvet, with a frame composed of very thick gold-colored purse silk, worked in chain-stitch; three medallions on each bracket.

The Society of Decorative Art in Boston recently had to give up its rooms, and for a time its possessions were stored. It is now temporarily located in the basement of the building occupied by the Boston Art Club, 64 Boylston Street. A permanent abiding place will soon be decided on.

A set of a half-dozen pictorial lithographic cards which Mr. Hays selected while in Paris this summer for distribution among his customers during the holidays shows to what perfection this branch of art has reached. On a background of dead gold are represented in six scenes the antics of three naughty little boys in school, among which are humorously depicted the tripping up of the master on a slide, squirting soda-water into his eye while he is asleep at his desk, and throwing into his face paper darts while he is awake.

Slippers in crewel embroidery on flannel, serge, and momie cloth, are fashionable, the design being conventional or floral.

Little table or hot-water-jug mats look pretty made of serge, with appliqué ivy leaves sewn on in holland with unbleached thread; also with leaves of red or blue sateen or twill, worked with coarse thread or flossette of the same color. The red or blue should be on white serge or flannel, the holland on colored. Odds and ends may be used up in this way.

No better proof of the increasing popularity of decorative needlework as an occupation for ladies need be sought than the large number of new retail stores devoted to the sale of goods for it which are to be found in all the large cities of the Union. The chief wholesale houses in the business, like Bentley Brothers, have been busy all summer preparing for the winter trade, and yet fear that they will be unable to fill their orders. A visit to Bentley's rooms in Walker Street, where there are show-cases full of superb specimens of art needlework and books full of designs for amateurs, will well repay one for the trouble.

Upholstery felt has almost supplanted cotton goods for crewel work. It is made two yards wide and is less than half the price of cloth, which material it surpasses in adaptability to the purpose, readily yielding to the needle. Bentley Brothers have it in more than forty different shades of color.